DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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Dear Mr. Rawlings:

Your letter to President Carter concerning the recent tragedy in Guyana has been referred to me for reply.

The tragedy of Jonestown has no parallel. On Sunday, November 19, the U.S. Government faced a crisis situation in Guyana. A U.S. Congressman and others in his party had been killed. A settlement believed to include about 1,000 Americans was involved, and its situation was uncertain. It was apparent that the limited transportation and other resources of the Government of Guyana might be insufficient to cope with these events in an isolated area 120 miles from the capital. Medical evacuation for the injured Americans by U.S. military aircraft was immediately authorized, and the U.S. Government offered assistance to the Government of Guyana to prevent further loss of life.

The Guyanese indicated they needed helicopter lift and other support. As events progressed, it became evident that many Americans were dead. For a time, it was believed that there might be many survivors in the jungle, and the United States adjusted and increased its assistance to help the search by Guyana police and military. Finally, when the number of dead was clear, the operational requirements were to continue support of the extensive ongoing investigation of serious crimes and to identify, treat with dignity, and remove the bodies as quickly as possible to a facility that could deal with this immense problem. Extensive mortuary facilities were essential in the process of identification and investigation. Only the U.S. military had the equipment and facilities to handle this enormous problem. The removal of the bodies from Guyana was at the specific request of the Government of Guyana.

The President, acting under his constitutional authority as Chief Executive and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, ordered the departments of our government to take action to deal with this emergency. The operational deci-

Mr. C. Barney Rawlings, President,
Council of Nevada Veterans Organizations,
Post Office Box 15375,
Las Vegas, Nevada.

sions within the U.S. Government in this unique situation were made by the Secretary of State in conjunction with other members of the Cabinet.

The Federal Government does not ordinarily pay to bring back the remains of Americans who die abroad. That is a responsibility of their families. If no next of kin can be found, the country where the death occurred is responsible for burial. It was evident, however, that it was beyond the ability of individual families or of the facilities available in Guyana to resolve the unprecedented problems that characterized this situation. In fact, it was not even clear who the next of kin were without identification being established. The families of those who died at Jonestown are, of course, expected to bear the responsibility for the disposition of the remains in the United States.

The costs to the Government of an effort of this magnitude obviously are considerable although substantially less than the $8 million figure used in some press reports. It will be some time before the total is known. The Office of Management and Budget, together with other agencies, is reviewing the financial aspects.

The Department of Justice is fully exploring possible legal remedies which can be used to recover the cost the U.S. Government has incurred in removing and processing the bodies of Americans from Guyana. It will be some time before the results of these efforts are known, but you may be assured that we will continue to make every effort to keep the costs to the U.S. Government to the minimum necessary.

Sincerely,

Hodding Carter III
Assistant Secretary
for Public Affairs and
Department Spokesman

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ID DOS 781228060 THE WHITE HOUSE OFFICE

REFERRAL

TO: DOS DATE: DEC 28 78

REPLY: DIRECT REPLY. FURNISH INFORMATION COPY

IF MORE THAN 9 DAYS DELAY IS ENCOUNTERED PLEASE TELEPHONE MS. BYRNE 456-2113

BASIC CORRESPONDENCE AND CONTROL SHEET AND COPY OF RESPONSE (OR DRAFT) MUST BE

RETURNED TO: AGENCY LIAISON (ROOM 94) WHITE HOUSE.

REMARKS:

X LETTER ___ MAILGRAM ___ TELEGRAM ___ DATED: DEC 20 78

TO: PRESIDENT CARTER

FROM: G. BARNEY RAWLINGS, PRESIDENT, COUNCIL OF NEVADA VETERANS ORGANIZATIONS
P.O. BOX 15375, LAS VEGAS, NV 89114

SUBJECT: OPPOSES ADM. ACTION RE RETURNING JONESTOWN CASUALTIES AT PUBLIC EXPENSE

RESPONSE:

CLOSED OUT:

BY DIRECTION OF THE PRESIDENT:

PAMELA ZINN

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF CORRESPONDENCE

COUNCIL OF NEVADA VETERANS ORGANIZATIONS
(CONVO)

DOD
cc: SE

7824657

American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor
American Ex-POW'S, Inc.
American Legion
American Military Retirees Assn.
AMVETS #1 (Searchlight)
Disabled American Veterans
Fleet Reserve Association
Jewish War Veterans
Marine Corps League
Military Order of the Purple Heart
Military Order of the World Wars
Navy League
Pearl Harbor Survivors
Reserve Officers Association
The Retired Officers Assn.
U. S. Submarine Veterans
Veterans of Foreign Wars
Veterans of World War I

December 20, 1978

The Honorable Jimmy Carter
President
United States of America
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

The Council of Nevada Veterans Organizations, as the voice of thousands of veterans and their families in this State, wish to go on record strongly opposing the action taken by your Administration in returning Jonestown casualties at public expense.

It is a misguided and perfidious act as viewed by the living veteran whose comrades sacrificed their lives in the service of our country in far away places whose bodies were interred in mass graves --- and are still there.

By contrast, those at Jonestown had disavowed the United States and had departed the country. Why were they returned? Furthermore, a combat veteran stranded overseas by any circumstance is not now accorded the considerations given Jonestown survivors at taxpayers expense!

We feel that at the very least, the funds recoverable from Jonestown should be taken to reimburse the U.S. Treasury for public funds expended on the hideous Jonestown affair - - and we so urge.

Respectfully,

G. BARNEY RAWLINGS
President

CASTLE ANDERSON
Vice President

GBR:eb

MOTTO: All of us are stronger than any of us.

Copies for:

Senator Paul Laxalt
Senator Howard Cannon
Congressman James Santini
Senator Jake Garn
Senator Barry Goldwater, Sr.

National Commanders:

American Defenders of Bataan & Corregidor
American Ex-Prisoners of War
American Legion
American Military Retirees
AMVETS
Disabled American Veterans
Fleet Reserve Association
Jewish War Veterans
Marine Corps League
Military Order of the Purple Heart
Military Order of the World Wars
Navy League
Pearl Harbor Survivors
Reserve Officers Association
The Retired Officers Association
U.S. Submarine Veterans
Veterans of Foreign Wars
Veterans of World War I

Department of Nevada Commanders:

American Legion
Disabled American Veterans
Veterans of Foreign Wars
World War I Veterans
The Retired Officers Association (Reno/Las Vegas/Carson City)